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The Various Types of Vaginal Bleeding in Islam and How They Affect The Act of Sexual Intercourse Between a Husband and Wife

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

Menses (Menstrual vaginal bleeding):

If the wife is experiencing her menses (hayd), she and her husband are not permitted to engage in the act of sexual intercourse until after her menses has passed and she has purified herself. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:222) of the Quran which reads: **"They ask thee concerning women's courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution; So keep away from women in their courses and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may**

approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." Likewise, Abu Hurayrah reported in a hadith collected by Abu Dawud that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said: "**If anyone resorts to a diviner and believes in what he says, or has intercourse with his wife when she is menstruating, or has intercourse with his wife through her anus: he has nothing to do with what has been sent down to Muhammad (P.B.U.H.)**!" What is more, Ibn Abbas (RA) was even of the opinion that one guilty of having sexual intercourse with his wife while she is menstruating should be required to give half a Dinar as expiation. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud which declares: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: 'Whoever has sex with his wife during her menses (*hayd*) should pay half a Dinar**.'"

With this being said, the one guilty of having sexual intercourse during their menstrual cycle should purify themselves physically by performing a complete ghusl and spiritually by making a sincere repentance to Allah. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Huraira reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'When a man sits in between the four parts of a woman (two arm and two legs) and**

has sexual intercourse with her, a bath becomes compulsory." Furthermore, the evidence for making a sincere repentance to Allah is a hadith collected by Tirmidhi wherein Anas (RA) reportedly said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) say, Allah stated: '**O son of Adam! I will forgive your sins no matter how many you have committed irrespective of their greatness as long as you pray to me and you expect forgiveness from me. O son of Adam! I will forgive you even if your sins are so many as to fill the skies if you ask forgiveness from me. O son of Adam! If you come to me with so many sins as to fill the earth, I will welcome you with so much mercy as to fill the earth if you have not associated partners with me**.'" Lastly, even though having sexual intercourse during the time of menses (hayd) is a detestable act, a husband is still permitted to embrace his wife, provided that her vaginal area is adequately covered. This fact is evident from a hadith in the collection of Bukhari wherein it is related from Zaynab bint Abi Salama: "**Umm Salama said, 'Once while I was with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) under a black woolen cover I started my menstrual period and I slipped away and came out of it and got my menstruation clothes. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said to me, 'Have you started menstruating?' I said. 'Yes.' He called to me and I lay down again with him under the cover**.'" Likewise, a hadith collected by Imam Muslim that was narrated by Ayesha (RA) reports: "**When**

anyone amongst us (amongst the wives of the Prophet) menstruated, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) would ask her to tie a waist-wrapper over her (body) and then he would embrace her." However, as a precaution, it is better for the couple if the husband does not play with his wife's body between the navel and the knees to avoid coming into contact with her menstrual blood. Lastly, if at any time during sexual intercourse the wife discovers that her period has begun, the husband should immediately cease the sex act and purify himself. In this instance he will not be considered sinful in the eyes of Allah provided that he stops immediately after discovering the presence of his wife's menstrual blood.

Istihadah (Non-menstrual vaginal bleeding):

In instances wherein a wife is experiencing vaginal bleeding that is not related to menstruation (hayd), her husband in this instance, is permitted to have sexual intercourse with her provided that she purifies her body before commencing the sex act. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Ayesha (RA) reportedly said: **"Fatimah bint Abi Hubaysh came to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), I am a woman who experiences Istihadah (non-menstrual vaginal bleeding) and I do not become clean from bleeding. Should I forget about Salah?' He said: 'No, that is**

from a vein; it is not menses. When your period starts, then stop praying, and when it ends, wash the blood from your body and pray again.'" What is more, another version of this hadith that was narrated by Abu Mu'awiyah reported that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) further said: "**Make Wudu for each prayer, until the time for the next prayer comes...**'" Thus, in view of the above mentioned ahadith, since the female's body is considered purified to the point that she is permitted to make her daily required fard prayers, her body is therefore considered purified to the extent that she can lawfully engage in sexual intercourse with her husband. Likewise, another hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated by Umm Salamah (RA) provides the method for which a wife should use to distinguish her non-menstrual vaginal bleeding (istihadah) from her menses (hayd). The hadith in question reads as follows: "**I asked the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) about this condition. He (P.B.U.H.) said, 'She should wait for the days and nights of her normal period and figure them out of the month, and she should leave the prayer during those days. (Afterwards) she should perform ghusl, tighten something around her vagina and then pray**.'" Therefore, once a wife is able to distinguish her non-menstrual vaginal bleeding (istihadah) from her menses (hayd), based on her body's normal cycle, she should then purify herself with a complete

ghusl, and thereafter, she will lawfully be permitted to have sexual intercourse with her husband.

With this being said, it is important to note that hayd is the natural flow of blood from the womb which occurs approximately monthly in a woman after her body starts to have a monthly period. If the bleeding exceeds the longest duration of hayd, it is merely classified as irregular vaginal bleeding which is referred to as istihadah. Unlike menses, which has a blood source that stems from the uterus after puberty and contains unfertilized ova, the non-menstrual vaginal bleeding of istihadah is generally caused by the al-adhil vein or some other reason; i.e., it is purely blood. However, due to the dilemma of determining the longest duration of a female's actual hayd, the issues pertaining to menstruation can be quite controversial. This fact is evident from the statements of Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (RA) in Majmoo' Al-Fataawaa, 19/237 wherein he reportedly said: "Allah has attached numerous rulings to menses in the Quran and Sunnah; however, He did not state the minimum or maximum length of a female's menstrual cycle; nor the length of the period of purity between two separate menstrual cycles." He further said: "Some of the scholars defined a maximum and minimum, but they differed concerning that, and some even stated a maximum length without defining a minimum. Nevertheless, the

third view is most correct, which states that there is no minimum or maximum length for a female's menstrual cycle." Therefore, if a wife experiences regular monthly periods, and then becomes irregular and exceeds the longest duration of her hayd, or if she was never regular and now her periods are longer than the longest hayd duration of any previous menstrual cycle, she will be regarded as a mustahadah.

According to Shaykh Bin Baz, "A Mustahadah is a woman who suffers from abnormal vaginal bleeding outside the menstrual or post-partum periods. As such, the same ruling will apply to her as any other non-menstruating women. Accordingly, she is allowed to observe Sawm (Fast), offer Salah (Prayer), and have sexual intercourse with her husband. However, she must perform wudu (ablution) before each Salah, as in the case of one who should perform wudu due to passing urine or wind. She also has to clean away the discharged blood with a piece of cotton or something similar to keep her body and clothes clean." With this being said, the wife who is regarded as Mustahadah will belong to one of the following three categories:

1. The wife is able to differentiate between the menstrual (hayd) which is dark in color, thick and heavy in consistency, with a distinct smell, and does not clot; from her non-menstrual blood (istihadah) which is lighter and

thinner. Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (RA) in Majmoo' Al-Fataawaa, 19/237, confirms the above mentioned distinctions between menses and istihadah to be as follows: "Color (menstrual blood is black [dark red] while the blood of istihadah is red); consistency (menstrual blood is thick and heavy, while the blood of istihadah is thin); smell (menstrual blood has an offensive odor while the blood of istihadah does not; because, it comes from an ordinary vein); and clotting (menstrual blood does not clot when it comes out of the body while the blood of istihadah does clot because it comes from a vein)." Thus, whenever vaginal bleeding is detected by the wife, whether it is a little or a lot, it will be classified as either her menses or istihadah based on the above mentioned characteristics. The evident for the above mentioned description of menstrual blood is the hadith of Abu Dawud which reads: "**Once, when Fatimah bint Abu Habash had a prolonged flow of blood, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) told her, 'If it is the blood of menstruation, it will be dark and recognizable. If it is that, then leave the prayer. If it is other than that, then make ablution and pray, for it is only due to a vein**.'" Another version of this hadith narrated by Fatimah daughter of Abu Hubaysh reports: "**Urwah ibn az-Zubayr reported from Fatimah daughter of Abu Hubaysh that her blood kept**

flowing, so the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said to her: When the blood of the menses comes, it is black blood which can be recognized; so when that comes, refrain from prayer; but when a different type of blood comes, perform ablution and pray, for it is (due only to) a vein."

Lastly, a woman can be certain that her period has ended by two distinct signs; namely, by the presence of a white discharge which comes from the womb to show that the period is over, and by the complete absence of menstrual blood in its various shades; whenever the white discharge is not detected. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Bukhari in mu'allaq form wherein Ayesha (RA) reportedly said: **"Women would send (me) Ayesha small boxes with yellow-stained cotton, and I would tell them, 'Do not be in haste until you see the pure white discharge on the cotton.' If the discharge is yellow or muddy during the days of menstruation, it is to be considered as part of the menses. During other days, it is not regarded as such. Umm Atiyyah said, '(After we were pure), we did not consider the yellow or muddy discharge to be anything.'"** It is also worth mentioning that a wife's judgment should not be overshadowed regarding the establishment and ending of her menses; because, in a

hadith collected by Bukhari, Ali and Shurayh are reported to have said: "**If a woman brings testimony from members of her close family, who are known to be good Muslims, that she menstruates three times a month, she should be believed (that the blood is not istihadah)**."

2. The wife is neither able to differentiate between the menstrual (hayd) and non-menstrual bloods (istihadah), nor can an expert assist her in telling the difference between the two; however, she is able to remember the routine of her monthly period based on the manner in which it occurred in previous months. With this being said, the evidence for the method that a female should use to differentiate between the menstrual (hayd) and non-menstrual bloods (istihadah) is the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Aisha (RA) reportedly said: "**Bahiyyah said: 'I heard a woman asking Aisha about the woman whose menses became abnormal and she had an issue of blood. The Apostle of Allah (P.B.U.H.) asked me to advise her that she should consider the period during which she used to menstruate every month, when her menstruation was normal. Then she should count the days equal to the length of time (of her normal menses); then she should abandon prayer during those days or equal to that period. She should then take a bath, tie a cloth on**

her private parts a pray.'" Therefore, if a wife can neither distinguish between the two types of bleeding, nor can an expert, then she should govern herself according to the habit of her previous menstrual cycles, and avoid praying, fasting, and having sexual intercourse with her husband during those days of the month in which she would generally be experiencing her menses. Anytime of the month thereafter, it is permissible for her to resume her acts of worship to Allah and have sexual intercourse with her husband.

3. A wife cannot differentiate between her menstrual (hayd) and non-menstrual bloods (istihadah), her bleeding happens to be of only one type, she cannot remember the routine of her monthly period based on the manner in which it occurred in her previous monthly cycles, or she simply has never had a monthly period prior to the occurrence of the bleeding; in this instance, the wife in question should consider her bleeding to be that of hayd for six to seven days, and then she should resume having sexual intercourse with her husband; in addition to performing her other acts of worship to Allah. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said to Hamnah bint Jahsh: "**Observe your menses for six or seven days, Allah alone knows which**

it should be; then wash. And when you see that you are purified and quite clean, pray for twenty three or twenty four days and nights, and fast, for that will be enough for you. Furthermore, do so every month; just like the women whom menstruate and are purified at the time of their menstruation and their purification."

A final and important note regarding the issue of menses involves the manner in which a wife should purify her body and keep it smelling pleasant. The evidence for the sunnah method of purification is the hadith collected by Imam Muslim, wherein Ayesha (RA) reportedly said: "**Asma inquired the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) about the bath for purity from Menses. He stated: 'First put some berry leaves (antiseptic soap, scented oil etc.) in the water. Then put the water on the head and rub the hair well so that the water reaches the roots of the hair. Then pour water on the entire body. Then take some cotton wool scented with musk and purify yourself (to remove bad smell).' Asma (RA) endured: 'How to purify by cotton wool?' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) stated: 'Pure is Allah! Purify yourself.' Ayesha (RA) whispered: 'Place it at the place of menses...'**" Furthermore, a hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim that was narrated by Ayesha (RA) also reports: "**Asma (RA) asked the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) about ghusl following menses. He said: 'Let**

one of you take her water and lotus leaves and clean herself well, then let her pour water over her head and rub it vigorously so that it will reach the roots of her hair. Then let her pour the water over herself, then take a piece of cloth scented with musk and purify herself.' Asma then said: 'How should she purify herself?' He (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Subhaan-Allaah! Purify yourself with it.' Ayesha said, as if she whispered it to her, 'Follow the traces of blood.' And she asked him about ghusl in the case of janaabah. He said: 'Let her take water and clean herself well or clean herself thoroughly, then let her pour water over her head and rub it so that it reaches the roots of the hair, then let her pour water over herself.' Ayesha said: 'How good the women of the Ansaar were! They did not let shyness prevent them from understanding their religion properly.'"

Likewise, a hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated by Aisha (RA) further reports: **"A woman of the Ansar said to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) 'How should I perform ghusl after menstruation?' He said, (after making ghusl) 'Take a piece of perfumed cloth and clean yourself three times.' Then the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) became embarrassed and turned his face away. I took her and pulled her to one side and explained to her what the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) meant.'"** Moreover, in light of this evidence it is therefore important to note that when performing ghusl, a woman does not have to actually undo the braids in her hair,

unless they are tied so tightly that she fears that the water will not reach the roots/scalp; because, in the hadith of Imam Muslim, Umm Salamah (RA) narrated that she said to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.): "**I am a woman with braided hair; should I undo it when doing ghusl following menses or for janaabah? He said: 'No, rather it will be sufficient for you to pour three handfuls of water on your head, then pour water over yourself and you will be purified.**'" However, there are some narrations which maintain that the braided hair of a woman at the completion of her menses must be unbraided; such as the narration from Umm Salamah in a hadith collected by Imam Muslim which states that she asked the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) about a woman's bath (ghusl), and he reportedly said: "**If a woman is performing ghusl after having sexual intercourse, then there is no need for her to unbraid her hair. It is sufficient that she pours water over her head three times. But, when she is performing ghusl after completing her menstrual period, then she has to unbraid her hair.**" Nevertheless, regardless of which method a wife uses to purify herself after the completion of her menses, it is imperative that she totally avoids exposing herself to any person other than her husband; as in the case of a woman who exposes herself to others in a public bath. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith collected by Tirmidhi wherein Jabir (RA) reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Whoever believes in Allah and the**

Last Day, let him not allow his wife to go to the Public baths. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not go to the baths except with a waist-cloth. And whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day let him never sit at a table at which intoxicants are being circulated.'" Likewise, the evidence for the permissibility of a wife to expose herself in front of her husband is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Hisham bin Urwa (on the authority of his father) narrated that Aisha said: "**I and Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) used to take a bath from a single water container, from which we took water simultaneously**."

Nifas (Post-natal bleeding):

In addition to during the times of her menses, a wife is also not permitted to have sexual intercourse with her husband while she is experiencing post-natal bleeding (nifas); which is the term that applies to the blood which flows from the uterus after childbirth; regardless of whether the baby is born alive or stillborn. However, in rare instances wherein a wife gives birth to a baby without any bleeding, the general ruling pertaining to nifas will not apply to her. Therefore, in instances wherein a wife experiences difficulties during childbirth and ultimately delivers her baby by means of a Caesarian section, in which case the baby exits her body from a method other than by traveling through her vagina, she will not

be classified as experiencing nifas as long her vagina does not leak any blood from the labor. Also, if a wife has a miscarriage and human features, such as the head, limbs, or even the outlines thereof have not yet appeared on the fetus, the bleeding which occurs in this instance will be classified as istihadah; because, the pregnancy has yet to produce an actual fetus. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Hajj (22:5) of the Quran which reads: **"O mankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then verily! We have created you (i.e. Adam) from dust, then from a Nutfah (mixed drops of male and female sexual discharge i.e. offspring of Adam), then from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood with no circulation) then from a little lump of flesh (mudghah), partly formed and partly unformed, that We may make (it) clear to you (i.e. to show you Our Power and Ability to do what We will). And We cause whom We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term, then We bring you out as infants, then (give you growth) that you may reach your age of full strength. And among you there is he who dies (young), and among you there is he who is brought back to the miserable old age, so that he knows nothing after having known...."** Likewise, a hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated by Hudhayfa (RA) maintains that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said that it is not until after forty-five days after conception; nearly nine weeks, that the pregnancy produces an

actual fetus. The hadith in question reads as follows: "**The angel is sent to the sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfah) after it has settled in the uterus for FORTY OR FORTY-FIVE NIGHTS (nearly 9 weeks after conception) and says, 'Lord! Is it to be wretched or happy?' Then this is inscribed. Then he says, 'Lord! Is it to be male or female?' Then this is inscribed, together with its deeds, its progeny, its term of life, and its sustenance. Then the records are folded up and nothing more is added or subtracted.**'" What is more, the fact that the hadith mentions that it is not until after this forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) that the angel asks Allah: **'Lord! Is it to be male or female?'** proves that the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) statements are in accordance with modern embryology; i.e., it is not until after the forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) that an actual fetus is formed with its visible sex organ. This fact is evident from a December 4th, 2012 article titled, "Pregnancy week by week" from the Mayo Clinic's website (www.mayoclinic.com), which reports as follows: "At the beginning of the 11th week of pregnancy, or the ninth week after conception, your baby's head still makes up about half of its length. However, your baby's body is about to catch up, growing rapidly in the coming weeks. Your baby is now officially described as a fetus. This week your baby's eyes are widely separated, the eyelids fused and the ears low set. Red blood

cells are beginning to form in your baby's liver. **By the end of this week, your baby's external genitalia will start developing into a penis or clitoris and labia majora**."

It is also worth mentioning that additional evidence proving that a pregnancy does not produce a living human until after the forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) is the hadith of Bukhari that was narrated by Anas (RA) who reportedly said: "**Allah Most High has appointed an angel over the uterus who says, 'Lord! It is now a sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfa). Lord! It is now a thing that clings (alaqa). Lord! It is now a thing like chewed flesh (mudghah); i.e., partly formed partly unformed** (**showing that all of these early stages take place around the first forty-five days of development**).' **Then, when he wants to complete its fashioning (showing that at this stage (mudghah) the fetus is partly formed and partly unformed with no visible sex organ), he (the angel) asks, 'Male or female; happy or wretched? What is his share of sustenance? What is his term of life?' All this is inscribed [as it is] in his mother's belly**.'" Lastly, a hadith collected by Imam Muslim that was narrated from Hudhayfa ibn Asad reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'After the sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfa) has been [in the uterus] forty-two days, Allah sends it an angel that gives it form and fashions its hearing, sight, skin, flesh, and**

skeleton.'" Thus, it is not until the mudghah stage of development that a miscarried fetus is developed to the point that it can scantily be distinguished from menses. Consequently, if human features have already appeared on the fetus, then the bleeding is classified as nifas.

In view of the above mentioned information, it is also important to note that many authorities deduce that the soul enters the fetus after four months (120 days) of pregnancy due to the wording of the transliteration for hadith No: 4 in An-Nawawi's 40 Hadith. The hadith in question that was narrated by Abdullah bin Masud reads as follows: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) the most truthful, the most trusted, told us: 'Verily the creation of any one of you takes place when he is assembled in his mother's womb; for forty days he is as a drop of fluid, then it becomes a clot for a similar period. Thereafter, it is a lump looking like it has been chewed for a similar period. Then an angel is sent to him, who breathes the ruh (spirit) into him. This Angel is commanded to write four decrees: that he writes down his provision (rizq), his life span, his deeds, and whether he will be among the wretched or the blessed...**'" The transliteration of this hadith clearly says that the fetus goes through three stages of forty days each (nutfah for 40 days, alaqah for 40 days, and mudgah for 40 days). Then, after the

third stage i.e., 120 days, the soul is breathed into the human body. Therefore, the problem arises from the issue of whether the three stages in question actually occur collectively in approximately forty days or a period of forty days each.

Interestingly enough, this narration by Abdullah bin Masud was recorded with different versions wherein some words/terms conflicted with each other, resulting in different versions of the hadith having different meanings regarding a baby's Creation. One such problem stems from the addition of the word "nutfah" (the drop of a fluid). The word "nutfah" is neither found in the narrations collected by Bukhari nor those of Imam Muslim. However, it was added to other narrations including the one chosen by An-Nawawi to provide a better interpretation of the stages of fetal development. Unfortunately, it generated two conflicting views of the creation of mankind in terms of fetal development. In light of this dilemma, the Scientific Research Committee of IslamToday.net provides the following findings of Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo's commentary from al-Nawawi's 40 Hadith, which reads as follows: "In this case, the oversight may substantially change the meaning of the hadith. With this word (nutfah) missing, the hadith can be understood in the following manner: '**Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother's abdomen for forty days. It is then a clinging object during that**

same period. Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed during the same period.' Hence, all of these stages take place in the first forty days. This way of understanding the hadith is not only consistent with what is considered today as a 'scientific fact,' it is also consistent with the other narrations related to this topic; such as the following three Sahih ahadith from the collection of Imam Muslim, from the section of Kitab al-Qadar, which reads as follows: "**Hudhayfah bin Usayd (RA) narrated: 'After the drop (nutfah) is in the womb for forty or forty-five nights, the angel comes to it and says: 'O Lord, will it be fortunate or unfortunate?' And these matters shall be written. Then he says: 'O Lord, will it be male or female**?'" Likewise, a second hadith reads: "**When the drop (nutfah) passes forty-two nights in the womb, God sends to it an angel who shapes it and creates its hearing, seeing, skin, flesh, and bones. Then he says: 'O Lord, is it a male or a female?' Then your Lord decrees whatever He wills...**'" Lastly, "**The drop (nutfah) remains in the womb for (about) forty nights. Then the angel appears to it...**" As a final point, it is worth mentioning that neither the Quran nor any ahadith on this subject gives a time frame of 120 days.

It is also important to note that after the stage of pregnancy wherein a fetus has fully developed hearing, sight,

and feelings, it is automatically classified as a human being. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Sajdah (32:9) of the Quran which reads: **"But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): little thanks do ye give!"** Also, Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:12-13) of the Quran reads: **"Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); Then We placed him As (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made A (mudghah) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh (in rapid succession); then We developed out of it another creature (the human being). So blessed be Allah; the best to create!"**

Once it has been determined that the bleeding of a wife is not her menses, and is in fact blood related to childbirth (the features of the fetus are recognizable), as soon as the bleeding stops, the wife in question should purify her body. However, the scholars differed as to whether ghusl is obligatory in this instance; because, post-natal bleeding (nifas) has no minimum duration; i.e., bleeding does not have to last for forty days. In fact, postnatal bleeding could actually stop right after the delivery of the baby, or there may not even be a single drop of

blood visible from the delivery. Thus, in the absence of postnatal bleeding the wife's restrictions would end and she would be obliged to fast, pray, have intercourse once healed, and so on. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there is however a maximum duration of forty days for nifas, which is based on the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Umm Salamah, Ummul Mu'minin (RA) reportedly said: "**The woman having bleeding after delivery (postpartum bleeding) would refrain (from prayer) for forty days or forty nights; and we would anoint our faces with an aromatic herb called wars to remove dark spots**." Moreover, another hadith of Abu Dawud that was narrated by Umm Salamah (RA) reports: "**During the lifetime of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), the post-childbirth woman would be deemed in restriction for (a maximum of) forty days**." Lastly, in the event that a wife becomes a widow due to the death of her husband, even if she is still suffering from postpartum bleeding and four months and ten days of iddah have not elapsed, she is still permitted to remarry; because Surah Al-Talaq (65:4) clearly says: "... **And as for pregnant women, their term shall end with delivery (of the baby)**." However, her nifas (post-partum bleeding) must cease before she can consummate the marriage with her new husband. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud wherein Ubaidullah bin Abdullah bin Utba (bin Mas'ud) reported that his father wrote to Umar bin Abdullah bin al Arqam

al-Zuhri that he would go to Subai'ah bint al-Hirith al-Aslamiyya (RA) and ask her about a verdict from him which Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) gave her when she had asked that from him (in regard to the termination of 'Idda at the birth of a child). 'Umar bin Abdullah wrote to 'Abdullah bin 'Utba informing him: **"Subai'ah had told him that she had been married to Sa'd bin Khaula and he belonged to the tribe of Amir bin Lu'ayy, and was one of those who participated in the Battle of Badr, and he died in the Farewell Pilgrimage and she had been in the family way at that time. And much time had not elapsed that she gave birth to a child after his death and when she was free from the effects of childbirth she embellished herself for those who had to give proposals of marriage. Abd al-Sunabil bin Ba'kak (from Banu 'Abd al-Dar) came to her and said: 'What is this that I see you embellished; perhaps you are inclined to marry, By Allah, you cannot marry unless four months and ten days (of 'Iddah are passed).' When he said that, I dressed myself, and as it was evening I came to Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) and asked him about it, and he gave me a religious verdict that I was allowed to marry when I had given birth to a child and asked me to marry if I so liked. Ibn Shihab said: 'I do not find any harm for her in marrying when she has given birth to a child even when she is bleeding (after the birth of the child) except that**

her husband should not go near her (sexually) until she is purified.'"

With this being said, if the bleeding of a wife either starts or resumes within the forty day period, it will be classified as nifas; and whatever goes beyond the established timeframe of forty days will be considered istihadah (non-menstrual vaginal bleeding), which does not prevent her from praying, fasting, having intercourse with her husband, etc. It is also important to note that the blood and amniotic fluid which accompanies the labor of childbirth is also not regarded as nifas, but rather istihadah. This issue was addressed by Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen in Fatawa Noor 'ala al-Darb when he reportedly said: "Nifas is blood and not water. Moreover, if it was nifas, it would be accompanied by labor pains two or three days before giving birth. But if this occurs a long time before giving birth, then it is not nifas; because, nifas is the blood that comes out either at the time of birth or two or three days before it; and it is also accompanied by labor pains. As for water (amniotic fluid), it is not nifas." The evidence proving that any vaginal bleeding of a wife prior to childbirth or outside of her normal menstrual cycle is actually istihadah is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Ayesha (RA) reportedly said: "**Umm Habiba (RA) got bleeding in between the periods for seven years**.

She asked Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) about it. He ordered her to take a bath (after the termination of actual periods) and added that it was (from) a blood vessel. So she used to take a bath for every prayer." Furthermore, in Fataawa Islamiyyah, 1/243, Shaykh Bin Baz reportedly said: "If a woman miscarries something in which human features such as a head, arm or leg etc. can be distinguished, then the rulings of nifas apply and she should not pray or fast; neither is it permissible for her husband to have intercourse with her until she becomes pure or until forty days have passed. However, if she becomes pure before forty days have passed, she has to perform ghusl and is then permitted to pray, fast in Ramadan, and have intercourse with her husband. But if no human features can be distinguished in what is passed by the woman, and it looks like flesh with no distinguishable features, or it is blood, then she comes under the ruling of one who is suffering from istihadah (non-menstrual vaginal bleeding)..." Shaykh Bin Baz is also quoted as saying, "If a woman's nifas stops before the forty days (after the birth) have elapsed, she has to do ghusl and pray and fast Ramadan, and it is permissible for her husband to have intercourse with her. If however the bleeding resumes within the forty days (after the birth), then she has to stop praying and fasting, and it is forbidden for her husband to have intercourse with her, according to the more correct of the two scholarly views. She

comes under the rulings on women in nifas until either the nifas stops or the forty days are over. If her nifas stops before or on the fortieth day (after the birth), then she should do ghusl and start praying and fasting; and it is permissible for her husband to have intercourse with her. If the bleeding continues after the fortieth day (after the birth), then this is irregular bleeding (istihadah) and she should not stop praying and fasting because of it; rather, she should pray and fast during Ramadan, and it is permissible for her husband to have intercourse with her – as is the case with a woman with istihadah (irregular, non-menstrual bleeding)."

Lastly, it is important to note that even when a wife is experiencing her monthly menses or has postpartum bleeding, it is absolutely lawful in Islam for her to enjoy all sorts of relations with her husband, except the actual act of sexual intercourse. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Masruq ibn al-Ajda asked Ayesha (RA), the wife of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.): **"What is off limits to me sexually during my wife's menstruation?' She said, 'Nothing, except her private parts**.'" Similarly, a hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated by Maimuna (RA) reports: **"Whenever Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) wanted to fondle any of his wives during their periods (menses), he used to ask her to wear an Izar (waist**

wrapper)." Furthermore, according to Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid: "Allah has permitted intercourse between a husband and wife at all times and in all places, with the following exceptions: 'While the sun is present in the sky during the Islamic month of Ramadan, while the wife is on her menses, while they are inside the masjid, and while either of them is in a state of Ihram while performing the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah or Umrah. However, at all other times, a husband and wife are permitted to engage in sexual intercourse.'" The evidence for this ruling of Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid regarding the prohibited times of sexual intercourse between a husband and wife are found in surah Al-Baqarah (2:187) of the Quran which reads: **"Permitted to you, on the night (not during the daylight hours) of the fasts (Ramadan) is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knows what you used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are limits (set by) Allah; Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to men; that they may learn self-restraint."** Further evidence is found in a hadith

collected by Bukhari, wherein Abu Hurayra reportedly said: **"While we were sitting in the company of Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) a man approached and said: 'O Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.)! I'm ruined!' The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'What is the matter?' He said: 'I had sexual relations with my wife while observing the Ramadan fast.' Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) then asked him: 'Can you find a slave whom you can free?' He said 'no.' Then he asked, 'are you able to fast for two consecutive months?' He said 'no.' Then he asked, 'do you have the wherewithal to feed 60 poor people?' He said 'no!' So, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) stopped and considered, and we waited like that until a large basket of dates was brought to him. He asked: 'Where is that questioner?' The man spoke up: 'Here I am.' The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Take this and give it out in charity.' The man then asked: 'Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), must I find someone poorer than myself to give it to? By Allah, there is no household in town poorer than my own.' The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) laughed until we could see his teeth, the said: 'Go feed your family.'"** Likewise, the evidence for not approaching one's wife while she is on her menses is Surah Al-Baqarah (2:222) of the Quran which reads: **"They ask thee concerning women's courses. Say: 'They are a hurt and a pollution, so keep away from women in their courses and do not approach them until they are clean...'"**